



**Total Funding:** US\$ 21 million

**Duration:** September 2009 - September 2014

**Implementer:**  
Emerging Markets Group



**While BiH has made economic progress in recent years, there are areas in which BiH firms still lack competitiveness. Many are learning now how to compete more successfully in global markets.**

## Fostering Interventions for Rapid Market Advancement (FIRMA)

### Challenge

While Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has made economic progress in recent years, many BiH enterprises are still struggling to compete in global markets. Constrained by inadequate financing, poor connections to global markets, and lack of skilled labor, they have limited opportunities to grow and compete.

### USAID Initiative

The Fostering Interventions for Rapid Market Advancement (FIRMA) project, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), is a five-year project to support sustainable economic growth, employment expansion, and higher median household incomes in BiH.

FIRMA's main objective is to help BiH improve its capacity to handle competitive pressure and market forces within the European Union, a critical step in preparing for accession. The project will focus on three sectors of the BiH economy: wood processing, tourism, and light manufacturing. These three sectors combined comprise approximately one-fourth of the country's gross domestic product and over one-third of its exports.

### Planned Activities

FIRMA will work with local firms to help them identify and prioritize problems, and strengthen their capacity to develop products attractive to foreign and domestic customers. Critical stakeholders include companies, financial institutions, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies.

FIRMA-supported activities include:

- Facilitating networking among sector firms and stakeholders
- Providing training and technical assistance to improve product quality, operational productivity, and managerial effectiveness
- Supporting workforce development
- Facilitating access to finance and promoting investment
- Improving connections to global markets
- Advancing the policy, legal, and regulatory environment to increase the ease of doing business in BiH

All of FIRMA's activities are carried out with support for environmental sustainability, increasing women's participation in entrepreneurship, and advancing EU alignment.